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necessity. On the same basis, we must allow at least a miocene emigration to the platyrrhine monkey which first came to America with his thirty-six teeth and his prehensile tail, while we must be prepared to find the origin of the monkey tribe itself disappear in the enormous gap which divides the eocene from the cretaceous age. In all this there would be nothing inconsistent with our present vague geological knowledge ; for, although no pliocene man has yet been identified, few geologists would care to deny the possibility of his existence, while an eocene monkey not unlike an American type is known to have lived in Switzerland. All that we have assumed is the truth of Lamarck's hypothesis, a purely scientific matter, about which we shall certainly not venture to express an opinion.

HENRY BROOKS ADAMS.

ART. V.—EPIC PHILOSOPHY.

HOMER begins the *Iliad* with "Sing, GODDESS," as if not himself, but a divine being, were the true poet. Shall we suppose that his invocation is merely formal ? that it is consciously addressed to Nothing ? To do so were to appreciate ill the simplicity and sincerity of Homer. Were it not also to misinterpret the law of all language ? Words are never empty formalities at the outset ; it was only a veritable meaning that made them. Men do not go about consciously giving names to nonentities. As well suppose a living body to have come into being without the action of any organizing force as persuade one's self that language is originated without belief. Words, like men, may grow old and die ; but only by sincere, vital action are they born. It is true that defunct vocables sometimes have their Hades here above ground, wandering about as shadowy semblances of their former selves, neither well dead nor yet alive. But Homer belongs to the young world ; and his words are not merely living, they are in excellent health, with red blood in them, and a bloom on the cheek. When, therefore,

he says, "Sing, O Goddess," one may be sure that the invocation is no piece of perfunctory compliment, but that his heart keeps pace with his tongue.

Upon whom does he call? The question may be asked with interest, for there is in this part of the old Greek mythology a profound significance, a fine soul of meaning, which remains true for us, and will be true forever, however its forms may prove transitory or grow strange. The "Goddess" is the Muse, — the Muses considered as one divinity. The Muses, again, were said to be daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, or Memory. It will be no waste of study to inquire into the significance of this parentage, and with Homer's devout appeal in mind.

Zeus, in the old Hellenic conception, is the eternal One, the unitive, sovereign genius of being. The physical meaning of the word, we are told, is *sky*, the pure heaven, changeless, all-embracing; but by a deeper and truer meaning it denotes the inner divine sky of the soul, rounding in, with its translucent, indivisible unity, the divided opacity and discord of time.* "From One all things proceed, and into the same are resolved," says Musæus, as quoted by Diogenes Laërtius. Zeus is this One, but rather in the moral sense, that of rule, than in the more metaphysical sense, which Musæus seems to have in

* All strictly primitive words seem to have at first a like twofold significance, physical-spiritual. It is the trick of lexicographers to represent the physical meaning as primary, the higher sense as only secondary and superinduced. Let us test this procedure in a single instance. The original sense of *rectus* is said to be *straight*; the secondary sense, *right*. We turn, however, to the root, *reg*, and find that the nearest word to this, formed immediately from it, is *rex* (regs), a king, or straightener in the strictly moral sense. Could evidence be clearer that the moral meaning was in the word from the first, at the root of it, and that, in making it a mere afterthought, the lexicographer has followed, not the indications of language, but his own whim of opinion? I cannot but anticipate a sure determination of the fact, one day, that man is a speaker only as he is a spiritual being; pure spiritual sensibility joined with a lower kind of impressibility to produce root-words. At first the words are held as common property by the two producing factors, nor is their twofold character for a long time, it may be, explicitly recognized. *Zeus* meant originally, I suppose, both a physical object, and a spiritual reality signified by that object; but to the first namers this meaning was strictly single, not double. When reflective discrimination began, and the word, instead of being divided in itself, and made to bear two widely distinct meanings, like our word *heaven*, went wholly over to the higher, the indication is that this import was the more powerful in it from the start.

mind. It is the testimony of language that man uttered his impression of this comprehending One when he first said *sky*; and since such an object must have been among the earliest named, we can trace that supreme recognition to the very dawn of his conscious being. All-comprehending, all-reconciling spiritual unity,—it is an import which the soul enshrines from the first and forever. And this is the Homeric Zeus, progenitor of the Muse.

On the other hand, Mnemosyne, Memory, symbolizes the sum total of such things as memory is concerned with,—incident, accident, event, whatever *happens*. In wide contrast, therefore, to the peace of eternity, she images the storied variety and conflict of time, the world of things eventful,—of multiplicity, diversity, contrariety, contention, the surface-world of Nature and man, with heterogeneity and mutation for its inseparable characteristics.

Thus in Zeus and Mnemosyne we have, on the one side, the universe in the everlasting peace and rest of pure unity,—on the other side, the universe in the character of dividedness, changefulness, with a myriad of diverse features and conflicting energies, here playing through a colored phantasmagory of magic mutation, there yawning in chasms of hate, set against itself, crashing in upon itself, blind with contending passion, black with tragic fate. From these opposites the Muse is born,—from these as at once opposite, and yet joined, made one in spousal love.

The Muse, then, is that symphony of existence which arises from the conjunction of these two terms, Spiritual Being in its essential pure oneness, and the world of finite character and action, of diversity and evanescence, the world of time. This conjunction is Music,—“music of the spheres,” in the Pythagorean phrase: an imagination peculiar to Pythagoras only in form of statement. It is upon this melodious Voice of the All that Homer calls devoutly, and of which he would be but the reporter or secretary.

Here we lay hold upon the prime fact by which he stands as the type of poetic genius. To him it is existence itself that is tuneful. Through the diversity of characters, the conflict of passions, and the whirl of events, the divine secret of the world

sings to his soul.* The impassioned, it may be infuriate, tossing, warring, woe of time gives, as he deems, but the notes, out of which the Spirit of the All makes up its eternal harmony.

That antique imagination may be embraced with serious modern conviction. Zeus and Mnemosyne symbolize still the two opposites, of which poesy is the wedding festival. Whoever truly sings, be it "the sweet psalmist of Israel" or Greek Æschylus, the author of the Book of Job or that of the Excursion, sings their espousal. The universe is unity; being rests in spiritual peace and poise forever. The sky is never clouded; only the earth is clouded. Nevertheless, there is the constant antithesis to this wholeness and repose, — antithesis expressed in ten thousand shapes, and pushed with such inexorable energy and excess that we wonder how the bands of eternity do not burst, and suffer the world to welter in immitigable craze. Oppositions and emulations arise, multiply, rage, gain appetite by what they feed on; countless tribes of creatures live only by slaughter, created to kill; existence sprouts all over in horns, fangs, tusks, claws, while from its horrid alembic venoms, hates, envies distil, and drip, drip upon its own blistering heart; hungry pestilences devour nations, — then, like the boa, retire and sleep into new hunger, that they may return to new feast; "the earthquake smacks its mumbling lips o'er some thick-peopled city," or the volcano binds about it, while yet living, a shroud of fire; strife is around man, and strife is within him; the lightning thrusts its blazing scymitar through his roof, the thief creeps in at his door, and remorse at his heart. Who, looking on these things, does not acknowledge that man is indeed fearfully as well as wonderfully made? Who would not sometimes cry, O that my eyes were a fountain of tears, that I might weep, not the desolations of Israel alone, but the hate of Israel to Edom and of Edom to Israel, the jar, the horror, the ensanguined passion and ferocity of Na-

* Virgil, on the contrary, regards himself only as the singer. It is true, that, after announcing himself as such, he makes a formal invocation to the Muse, but misses even formal propriety in doing so. For he does not pray the Divinity to pour for his ear the melody of existence, nor even to exalt his soul and make it melodious, but only to apologize, if possible, for the strange conduct of the Olympians: *Mihi causas memora*: Let the Muse, since she visits in that family, tell what set on Juno to pursue with revenges that remarkably nice man, my hero.

ture? But when we would despair, behold we cannot. Out of the conscious heart of humanity issues forever, more or less clearly, a voice of infinite, pure content: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for THOU art with me." Sometimes, when our trial is sorest, that voice is clearest, singing as from the jaws of death and the gates of hell. And now, though the tears fall, they become jewels as they fall; and the sorrow that begot them wears them in the diadem of its more than regal felicity. We, too, rest in the rest of Being; the changeless axis is here, it is in our souls; and around it all the movement of existence becomes orbital.

Eternal rest, endless unrest, — rest and unrest, it would seem, of the same universal whole. There is comprehending unity, that nothing invades, nothing eludes; there is yawning chasm that seems to go through the world, cleaving its very heart. Every globule of existence spins between these irreconcilable opposites. And yet they are not irreconcilable, for they *are* reconciled, though it be ineffably.

Now it is this tossing rest, this multiple unity, this contradictory and contending identity, that makes the universe epical; and to represent this within practicable limits, embodying in human speech the enticement, the awful, infinite charm of that mystery forever resolved and forever remaining, is the grand task of the epic artist.

The poet is the restorer of wholeness. He can strike the universal chord, that of identity, or spiritual unity. But he does this, observe, not by confounding distinction, blurring characteristic, hiding difference, explaining away contradiction, but, on the contrary, by displaying them. No one adheres with a fidelity religious like his to special character, finite fact. Individual feature and complexion, the peculiar expression of all objects, the circumstance and finest edge of all events, are, as it were, sacred to him, and come forth from beneath his pen with an exquisite, loving exactness of rendering. He will give you form, color, manner, gait, garb, tone of voice, measure of stature, tune of thought; minute he will be as Nature herself, nothing small to him which is characteristic; his very human condition he will, as it were, forsake, to spring with

grass-blades and hum with bees, to ripple with the ripening wheat and pass in the shadow of flying clouds, to dance with sunshine on the sea, or join its sprite-like hide-and-seek among quivering leaves; sorrow, too, and dismay he will depict as with a kind of love, — tempests that rage across the green fields of humanity, clothed in night and whirling along boughs rent from the tree of life, — frosts that descend untimely upon vernal years, to leave their blossoms shrivelled and all the glory of their garniture gone forever; and by this chase of diversities and celebration of contradictions he will bring out the refrain of the living whole, the repose, the unity, the infinite content of being.

Contrast this procedure with that of the mere generalizer. The latter spares himself all this delicate and subtle exactitude, very likely thinks it trivial. Betaking himself to generalities, he evaporates one generality into another more diffuse and vague, and, by an incessant elimination of feature, arrives finally at a statement the most general possible. At best he has attained only congruity, not consanguinity. His thought holds together, suppose, in itself; it does not bring souls, natures, together; it does not awaken the sense of a universal kindred, wherein the one immortal heart is felt to beat.

Even the naturalist, patient, tireless observer, faithful by his good-will to Nature in her speciality and her unity alike, can draw creatures into association only by mere points of outward resemblance, as two kinds here by a likeness in the hoof, two kinds there by a similarity in the hide, again two kinds by approximation in the shape of a scale. There is a catalogue of superficial resemblances, not community. The poet does not thus go on merely to enumerate points of external peculiarity and resemblance; he, on the one side, delineates the individual thing in the very feature, color, and aroma of its special being, yet, on the other hand, keeps up the interior conversation of each with all. Not by dead similarities, but by the living, flowing fellowship of heart-language, do the unlikes of voiceful Nature blend and symphonize in his thought.

Mr. Ruskin censures a dictum of Sir Joshua Reynolds, to the effect that poetry deals only with what is general and permanent, to the exclusion of transient particulars. The eloquent

critic brings forward good instances, with which Wordsworth offered him an abundant supply, to show, on the contrary, that the poet has an inevitable eye for minute traits and evanescent expression. The truth is parted between them. The poet sees the varying surfaces of Nature, and feels in them her constant heart. By a delicately true portrayal of what is most limited and transient, he appeals to a sentiment universal and perennial. Playing with the play of Nature, flitting with winged fancy through all the variety of her manifold forms and changing hues, he yet feels in all, and by the magic of melodious suggestion can make others to feel, that inner identity, that unceasing, ineffable return into oneness, which in the hidden sanctuary^f of existence is a joy of espousal forever. It is the ringing of these marriage-bells of Nature that is the music behind the words of his verse.

To be cordially sensible of an illimitable kindred, which, moreover, is not only boundless in scope, but divine in kind, purer far and richer in every beautiful claim and blessed response than any blood relationship, — is it not a surpassing delight? But the felicity comes to the last, finest edge, when one may enter into this immortal fellowship without loss of individual character, and, speaking there only his own vernacular, may join by means of it, and with no foreign nor provincial accent, in that language of the heart of humanity wherein was never yet a confusion of tongues.

Man is a stranger in the world, looking on with remote, unrelated eye, till the Muse make him at home there. This, touching upon all that seems most shut up to itself, most set apart from the spirit and sympathy of man, awakens a surprising refrain of fellowship in his breast. Now he lives a life not bounded by the limits of his individual constitution. It is as if an invisible system of nerves ramified from his breast, with a pole in every passing shadow, in every star, in whatsoever has form of being or seeming to the sense. Once that this is rightly addressed, his own being is reflected in all, claimed by all; his voice has an illimitable echo; his heart blends its beating with the vast rhythm of Nature; everywhere are relation and response; from sun and moon look down glorified human faces; wood and river teem with half-humanities, that sway in the

trees and slip in the tide ; from the lifted mountain-tops, and from the waste grandeur of the reticent, never-covenanting sea, comes a language at once theirs and his own ; the bladed grass claims kindred from beneath his feet, and the shadow cast by a stone on the moor moves him with some deep home-feeling, as if it were inscrutably inwrought with shadowy memories of the cradle and the mother's lullaby.

The poet can touch these nerves, and give sympathy the happiness of that unmeasured scope. But he can thus touch them, observe, only at their poles on the surfaces of Nature. Of this a sufficient suggestion is given by the economy of the human body. The brain itself is insensitive ; its feeling, at least its pleasurable feeling, is found at the fingers' ends, at the surfaces and extremes of the body. So it is that this universal heart in man is to be happily awakened only at the fingers' ends, the farthest reach, of its manifold relationship. Hence it is that the purest poetry is most objective. This touches the heart healthily, where the nerves of imaginative sympathy come to the surface. Introspection, on the contrary, invades the system, and strikes the nerves midway, hence is unhealthful and painful.

It is only in the sense of unity with the whole that the heart finds peace. Chasm is brutal. Yet he who seeks unity otherwise than in the diversity of Nature and movement of life, he who seeks it by prying and intrusion, finds, not a charmed repose, but only sickness. Nature sings to him who respects her secret, and who only by a reverent remoteness comes near ; and he who sings to others will scrupulously keep up the polarity of life, displaying identity only through the medium of peculiarity.

Take as an illustration Burns's "To a Mouse." The "wee beastie" is represented to the life, its habit and condition given without varnish.

"That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble !"

Leaves and stubble, got by nibbling : this is a veritable mouse, no transparent sham, like Dryden's "Hind and Panther," which are seen at a glance to be no more than a pair of cut and dried theologues masquerading on four legs, whereof

two are evidently broomsticks. But while a mouse, it is yet man; and the poet only brings his delineation to ripeness, when he says, —

“Me, thy poor earthborn companion
And fellow mortal.”

The outward circumstance retains its distinction, the hearts touch and beat together, and we have a truly poetical situation.

Emerson's “Humble-Bee” furnishes an illustration that will bear even closer inspection; for the external peculiarity is shown yet more pointedly, while the interior sympathy is not less, though suggested with a delicate reticence that adds to the charm. The painting is so minutely and exquisitely exact that I have sometimes said, should Nature one day lose the breed of bees, and forget what they were, she might recover the type from this model. Yet who reads without feeling that the humble-bee is one of us?

“Yellow-breeched philosopher,” —

it does not come jarring in, but belongs there; and because this open stroke of sympathy — in which, however, the humor still hints at distinction — is consistent with a piece of painting so objective, we have here a poem in the right sense of the word.

A like effect is reached, when a peculiar human character is so pictured that we at once perceive its remoteness from ourselves and feel it all in ourselves. The more entire, isolated, unapproachable, the more poetic its impression, if only it be so depicted that to every stroke of the delineation our hearts vibrate response. The more peculiar it shows itself, the more does it awaken in us the sense of our community. This is poetry.

It may be said, then, that poetry is the expression of comprehending spiritual unity by means of that which opposes and apparently denies it. This definition, however, is here only provisional. I hope soon to substitute for it another, which, while embracing this, shall be more adequate. At present let us obtain with precision what is in this.

First, let it be observed that the character of things which is opposed to their unity with the soul must not be in its own place denied. Even to disguise it there is to make its subsequent identification with the heart ridiculous. Dress the

mouse in jacket and trousers, as we sometimes see monkeys in the street, then say, "Fellow mortal," and the by-standers burst out laughing. Set the bee to discoursing on fate and free-will, and "yellow-breeched philosopher" loses its tone of fine sympathetic humor, to become a sorry jest.

Observe, secondly, that the separation of objects from the heart of the poet and of man is maintained by one order of apprehension, while the identity exists only to another. The one is bluntly, stubbornly, indomitably maintained by the prosaic understanding; the other is melodiously affirmed by the imagining heart, eternal priest at the marriage altars of Nature. Moreover, it is the interest of imagination that the prosaic faculty should hold its ground, yielding never an inch. There can be no espousal, if there is no duality, — no making one, unless there are two. The sense of spiritual community *plays over* somewhat which contradicts it; and it is this playing over which constitutes the poetic act. The imagination abhors confusion, though it craves community. It leaves finite objects, merely as such, to stand by and for themselves, refusing all cordial kindred with the spirit of man; and then, in nevertheless making fellowship between them and the human soul, it shows these objects to be capable of such fellowship only in quite another character than that which is proper to them as *things* merely. I will illustrate these points by a stanza of description taken from Wordsworth: —

"The sylvan slopes with corn-clad fields
Are hung, as if with golden shields,
Bright trophies of the sun!
Like a fair sister of the sky,
Unruffled doth the blue lake lie,
The mountains looking on."

Well, this is fine! — the understanding would say. Are we to *believe* that the fields have put on the corn as a suit of clothes? or that the said patches of corn, while having that sartorial character, are also captured shields, which the sun has hung up to commemorate his victories? or that the sky and lake are a kind of Jane and Nancy in the same family? or that the mountains really do look on? No; so far as the understanding is concerned, these statements are made only to be

disbelieved. To it they are sheer untruth, and are meant for untruth. The understanding is pre-engaged to dispute, to deny, to repugn them altogether. Just that is a part of the programme; and to leave it out would spoil the performance. Did not the statement infold its own contradiction on a lower scale, and thereby obtain the opposition of the prosaic understanding, like the opposition of the viol-string to the bow, it were not poetic truth. To say that Peter is clad, that Jane and Nancy are sisters, or look as if they were sisters, and that Hezekiah looks on, might be to affirm what is entirely credible; but such truth is not poetic truth, for the reason that it does not address itself to spiritual credence. In order that imagination and spiritual apprehension may be reached, there must be that "play over" we have spoken of, — therefore somewhat over which, and in contrariety to which, the play goes on. Thus the great privilege of the spirit to find the whole world kin is freed from confusion with any such community as the prosaic mind can recognize.

I have thus far spoken only of poetry; let it now be said that I have constantly had in view the being of man, regarding this as the poem of poems, — fast locked to any metaphysic which does not approach with a key corresponding to its poetic quality. In the being of man, in the universe of God, there is that "play over." It is, indeed, the grand secret; he that finds it out reads the Sphinx's riddle, and may save his soul alive. Finding it out perfectly, he will know what Spirit is; and until one knows that, does he in the highest sense know anything?

In order to clear up this matter, and prepare the way for further exposition, I wish now to establish a primary scale of degrees, that we may see definitely what is over, what under, and the validity of each in its own kind. And to invite a vigorous attention, I may say that we have now come to the hinge upon which all turns.

Nature as *thing* is Force and Form, no more. Scrutinized to any extent, it will exhibit only these characters, fixed force and form.

To the world of things corresponds in man the perceptive understanding. This finds in things a thing, — character, if one may speak so, — finds, that is, their special determinations, and the consequent isolation of each thing in itself. It is, we

might say, a brace between things, to keep them forever apart, without interior communication. It sees every object — ox, grass, hill, river, stone, man — as only itself, utterly locked up in its special identity.

Becoming scientific, however, the understanding not only discriminates, and specially identifies, but finds connections, and *looks* toward unity. But the unity is on the same level with the diversity, and is therefore only partial. There is unity of form between man and a fish, as both are vertebrate animals; there is diversity of form, as the one is a mammal and the other not such. The community of the two, and the special, isolate identity of each, are alike of form, and are therefore mutually limiting. Unity, accordingly, is never attained. The scientific intellect is more full than the ordinary perceptive understanding; but it works within the same limits, has the same kind of recognitions. It recognizes form, force, the constancy of force, and, lastly, as its highest perception, the *form of force*. What we call “natural law” is, of course, simply force formulated, that is, constant in measure and definite in character. Gravitation, electricity, chemical affinity, do not differ as *force*, but only as *forms* of force. Force and form, then, constitute the whole character of Nature in one aspect; and to it in this aspect the prosaic understanding corresponds.

Accordingly, the understanding can never, in any adequate manner, say *God*. It attempts often enough, with stretched mouth, to achieve that grand enunciation, and often supposes the feat accomplished. But its God can be only some particular object or force, supposably an immensely great thing, but after all only a *thing*, one thing among others. Of late some of its officers are making bold to say that no such Thing is discoverable. “God?” some Lewes will say; “what force or form of force is it? Is gravitation God? Is chemical affinity God? If neither of these, what force, then, and where is it?”

Suppose I answer, that God is *in* those forces, and in all others?

“In them?” he may reply; “how in them? how in gravitation? *As* gravitation? Then he is gravitation; and we have two words for the same thing. As somewhat other than gravitation? But what? Do we discern in gravitation anything but itself?”

"But there is somewhat which makes it," I plead.

"Makes what?" he will say. "Makes stones fall? Gravitation does that. Is there a making behind this making? Well, double, triple, centuple, if you will, the *makings*, all we come to is that stones are made to fall. There is a force which has this character; and wherever it is, the character of it is the same. Though the note of hand be indorsed by a hundred individuals one after another, the value of it remains the same."

"But," I say, making a last effort, "God is the unity of all forces."

He smiles provokingly. "You mean, perhaps, that he is that correlation and mutual convertibility of forces of which we are beginning to learn. Truly, I give you joy of a God so substantial!"

I leave the *savant* in possession of the field, easily victorious. It should be frankly confessed, that, as by no peeping and prying and inferring among the fiddle-strings can we discover the genius of the composer, so by no inspection of the formulations of force do we obtain the smallest glimpse of infinite Spirit.

Here we are, then, locked utterly into the limits of finite Nature. Can we, after all, make escape? I do not inquire whether we find in our own breasts a hint of spiritual comprehension and freedom,—we undoubtedly do find such; but it is said that this subjective impression, being contradicted by everything else in the universe, must be suppressed as mere private prejudice or illusion. Some indeed bravely refuse, and pledge their faith to the testimony of "consciousness"; the other party smile superior to "consciousness" none the less; the contestants find no common ground. We will therefore face the difficulty, and inquire whether it is possible to discover a road leading from Nature to Spirit, and to *Spirit as in itself* ALL. I think it can be found, and without any tedious groping.

Be it observed, then, that Nature has another character, very different from the one just noted,—the character, namely, of Sign or Expressiveness. To the primitive civilizers of humanity it is scarcely known otherwise than in this nobler character. Everywhere the first grand sallies of the human mind

overleap the fixed constitution of things, and alight upon somewhat of a higher order, which the world of things *suggests*. Is it not to this overleaping that all human speech is due? Man looks upon an object, and between it and the eye there springs up a felt poetic significance, which, before reflection has come to complicate mental action, is no sooner felt than it issues by a responsive sign, a word. Spontaneous naming is the act of identifying an object with its poetic significance, declaring that the thing *is* what it signifies. Only while the expression or suggestion of objects is taken in entire good faith as their reality is man a producer of root-words.

In the case of words which convey distinctively a moral, metaphysical, or spiritual import, this repose upon the sign-character of Nature is obvious. *Spirit* is *breath*; *right* is *straight*; *wrong* is *crooked*, — wrung, turned forcibly aside; *light* is *truth* or knowledge, — “the light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world” (the Parsees are said to worship fire or light, that is, they worship what it signifies, as Christians also do); *heaven*, too, is God, — “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven” we say indifferently; *warmth* is *love*; *coldness* is *indifference*; and so on: it were easy to multiply familiar examples, — and I seek no others, — to the weariness of the reader.

But I believe, still further, that man’s ability to name physical objects in the directest manner depends no less, though less obviously, upon their sign-character. Were they to man, as to the dog and ox, mere force and form, he would respond to them, in the animal fashion, by the forces of his organism only, by appetite, aversion, anger, fear, and the like. The aspect of green grass excites only the stomach of a cow: here is the mere relation of finite to finite; and accordingly the creature opens its mouth, not to speak, but to bite, — not to utter the object, but to swallow it. Man, on the contrary, sees natural objects as picture, suggestion, significance, and speaks them because to him they are speaking. How could he represent them by signs, did they not present themselves as significant, and as veritably present in their significance?

“Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth forth knowledge.” Verily, statements so noble as this,

coming to us from a far-off antiquity, might tempt one to think that the primitive poetic mind of humanity took off the cream of truth, and left its skimmed milk to science. But can we not perceive that day and night are indeed and forever voiceful? Speech runs and ripples over all the surfaces of Nature: here in grand affirmative tides, Amazons and Missouris of significance; there in vast, perpetual eddies of reverse meaning; again in whirling and dancing equivocations, evanescent half-expressions, with which only the flitting instability of fancy can keep pace. Speech breaks out as from an inner heart in things, and wraps itself as a many-colored mantle about them, hiding what they are in what they suggest; insomuch that the understanding must search as with a candle to discover beneath that glorious disguise their fixed and specific character. Science, coming late and with labor, tries to lift the mantle, tries to divest Nature of her garment of meaning; but one fold falls down as another is raised; only by endless pertinacity of industry and wide combination of effort is the *thing* at last denuded, and seen as it is in itself.

Half the world is now busy in this labor. "Off with it!" men say; "off with that garment of suggestion wherewith Nature clothed herself to the untaught intelligence of humanity!" As the work goes on, there are huzzas mingled with moanings, complainings, reproaches, — huzzas over notable progress achieved, complaint that so great a labor needs now to be done. The first men did us a mischief, it would seem, by permitting Nature to assume that array of significance. Had things been seen from the start as things really are, then what toil and difficulty had our age been spared! But those men, perverse, must go and be "theological," or "metaphysical," or the like: *hinc illæ lachrymæ*. The greater, however, the glory of our age, when, despite these needless hindrances, it peeps and pries, until at length the world of things appears without disguise. We complain, but still more do we exult. The great enterprise prospers; off it comes, that pictured array; the Thing lies bare!

Not quite, however. Seen *only* as it is in itself, the world of things is not yet, nor, in my judgment, is likely to be. Never yet was there a mind dry and prosaic enough to behold

any object in the mere light of the understanding, — to see in a horse, for example, only anatomy and physiology. To Dryasdust also, even to that portentous specimen of the genus, the Dryasdust of science, — Herbert Spencer, say, — the neck of the war-horse is indeed clothed with thunder, the Pleiades have sweet influences, the zephyr whispers, the storm roars, morning blushes, the sun rises rejoicing, night is vocal with solemn suggestion, and the blue heaven more, much more, than some gases and an optical illusion. Let Mr. Spencer do his best to see in Nature, as he says, only “force,” it will be to him also a language, will *speak* to his sensibility. Let Briareus use all his hundred hands, the mantle of meaning will fall down, and with its lettered folds wrap the heart of the Titan himself.

For by the Word the worlds were indeed made, as the Scriptures say. “And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.” Was; for light itself is but a shining syllable, and darkness another, that shines only in the breast of the speaker, not outwardly; and all the universe exists, word-like, only for and through its expressiveness. By the Word, by the perpetual act of Spirit giving expression to its inherent import, — which is its substance, itself, for Spirit is Absolute Import, self-affirmed, — the worlds were made, and do exist. Because Nature is spoken, it speaks; because it speaks, the spirit of man, kindred with the eternal Word, may espouse in Nature its own import, and evoke the representative world of uttered thought and feeling.

The imaginative intelligence recognizes in visible existence this character of Sign, and reads off from it a significance for the soul. *Force* and *form*, says the understanding; *import*, says the poetic intelligence. This *is* thus and so, reports the one; this *means* thus, announces the other. The former regards the finite world as substantial, and as asserting only itself; the latter regards the finite world as denying its own substantiality in behalf of that which it signifies.*

* Swedenborg sought to establish a science of significances, a science of Nature on that higher degree. Hence the gulf which separates him from the ordinary man of science. The latter is engaged in supplying what, with reference to the import of Nature, we must call its *grammar*; he looks to the classification and syntactical

“As denying its own substantiality,” I say. How is that? I hope the reader will say, How is that? and will say it with a purpose to be pointedly dissatisfied, unless the question be answered clearly and precisely.

A sign, observe, is necessarily the sign of *that which itself is not*. It exists only to say, “I am not it,” and in doing so to point effectually toward that which *is*. As the finger on the sign-board is not the road or city, as the spoken word *man* is not man, but only sound, so is it with all signs whatsoever: they point wholly away from themselves, being in themselves nothing to the purpose; they are there only for the eye to pass over; and, considered with reference to their real purpose, their entire being is a mere flitting away and vanishing into that which they suggest. Plainly, that which is meant by a word is the real thing. Plainly, a word, by the fact of having a meaning, implicitly denies that itself is at all the real thing. The meaning made the word, holds it in possession, and is all the being of it. The significance is the substantial fact; the sign, by the very fact of being such, professes itself the contrary. If now we venture to apply to the universe this easy and plain discrimination, all the difficulty will be in the venture, none in the application. Two and two are still neither more nor less than four, be the figures written in hundredths of an inch, or from Labrador to Cape Horn. Making bold to write our figures large, we may say with some confidence that the natural universe, as Sign, only spoken into being, and having its being only in its meaning, *denies its own substantive existence*; the meaning of it, not itself, is the real Fact; it is but a pointing, as of an index-finger, to that which indeed *is*.

What does it say *is*?

When one reads a word, considering it *as* a word, what does he implicitly affirm? Or what does the word itself, by the fact

relation of its etymons or elements. Now Shakespeare and Nature alike, merely as parsed, are void of meaning: we arrive at an order of arrangement, and at nothing more. Swedenborg sought not merely to parse, but to read; he assumed a meaning, and attempted a scientific exposition of it. I am not of those who think his success perfect, or other than very imperfect; sometimes it is only the dignity of the enterprise which forbids one to laugh. On the other hand, one must own that a grammar of the cosmos, were it complete, were not be sufficient. To do Lindley Murray on that scale is to work at a large task indeed; but though one parse the universe, is it enough merely to parse?

of being such, imply? It implies, and he who reads it implicitly affirms, Mind. Only from Mind could words issue; only to it are they expressive, — that is, indeed words. When the natural universe appears as expressive, a manifold sign, a language, it affirms Absolute Mind, Spirit. Only from this could a universal significance issue, only by it be embraced. If Nature mean anything, Spirit is what it means. And so the human race has thought; its apprehension of this truth is embodied in the confessions and litanies of all ages.

Now to read the world as a language, finding in it an import for the soul, is the essentially poetic act. We have thus arrived at the final definition promised: Poetry is the free reading up and down from Nature to Spirit and from Spirit to Nature, each seen in the other. The outward feature of Nature and life must be preserved, with the finest, most delicate exactitude, that we may not read in a blurred type; and yet in all the soul must find its own immanent secret.

The understanding, meanwhile, holds out sturdily against all this. Its business is to paint the index on the guide-board, that this may be there for that traveller, the spiritual imagination, to go by. Its utmost stretch is to observe that the traveller does go by, — that, looking on the sky, for example, the untaught man has cried, “Dyaus,” “Zeus,” “God,” making a sign of it, and flying infinitely beyond. But it can never verify this enunciation, nor indeed can believe in it; and, trying to give some account of that passage, it will strain a point and say, “Rhetoric.” This, too, is liberal of it, extremely liberal; it has grown to be a highly polite and tolerant understanding, when it gives the name of rhetoric to that passing by; before arriving at these handsome manners, it had bluntly said, “Nonsense.”

Has it now been made clear what poetry is? And has it also been rendered apparent, or at least credibly indicated, that the conscious being of man is itself, in the sense explained, a poem? If so, we may proceed to consider the epic in particular, anticipating that epical truth will be found not only in books, but in the fact of the universe.

We already know that the epic will represent comprehending spiritual unity, and beneath this its apparent contradiction.

We know also that the latter will be made to suggest just that which it seemingly contradicts, and so to negate its own negation. This is the character of all poetry; but what distinguishes the epic?

Its primary distinction is, that here the scale of the drawing is strictly and explicitly universal. Existence in its full breadth is the ground; the import of life in its full depth is the theme. Here are to be the ultimate poles: the pure Infinite, in contrast and correlation with finite Nature,—the sovereign, perfect consciousness of man, in like contrast and correlation with the most poignant contradiction supplied by his natural experience.

First, the unity is here that of Being itself, absolute Spirit. It is not merely a relative and subjective unity, that of mouse and mountain daisy, beggar and king, with *me*, but the pure One, which in oneness comprehends all. The oneness is, indeed, *the* oneness,—the One to which, in the highest sense, there is no Other,—absolute solvent, that liquefies all, englobing worlds like drops of dew, cosmic dew of suns and stars, mist of milky ways; and which, having pictured itself in Nature, whispers in the enchanted heart of man, I AM.* First, then, the eternal Zeus, rest of all hearts, community of all natures. No epical thought or genius has man without a consciousness of this perfect, universal Identity, this all-embracing sky of the soul.

Let this point be emphasized. What sort of epic were that wherein this ultimate import of the spiritual consciousness should not nobly and expressively appear? The sort of epic which is made such only by the title. The world has seen such, but could not keep them long in view. The Genius of the Whole is somewhat necessary to the parts, be it in a tree or in a universe, and so in a poem which attempts to sing the perennial character and relations of man's life.

It is not a little curious to see how the grasshopper intelligence of Voltaire skips about this prime requisite of the epic

* It is peculiar also to the epic that this Unity is made explicit, represented objectively, while in the drama proper it remains implicit, felt, not seen, a light to enlighten, but no sun visible. Compare Homer and Shakespeare. The *Prometheus* hovers between the two.

in his *Essai sur La Poésie Épique*. That he should attempt such a topic is laughable. Few men have been more skilful to break a jest; but here he was broken upon one. I once knew a youth who fancied himself a musical genius, because, having not the slightest ear for music, he was never to his own apprehension out of tune. At sight of a note he could promptly produce a noise; and though, to compare small things with great, it was like Milton's gates of hell grating harsh thunder, yet the innocent creature, not being deaf, as the hearers wished they were, never doubted that he was melodious, since beyond doubt he was vocal. I was reminded of him by reading the "philosopher" of Ferney upon the Epic; for never, perhaps, was a very clever man more incapable of following on the track of an epic imagination, or less aware of his own inability. He perceives that in Homer the gods appear; whereupon he briskly announces, that, in order to an epic, the "marvellous" must be introduced. Now the marvellous, merely as such, has no more a place in epic poetry than in science; nor, indeed, does it find place in any form of noble literature. The blank gape it produces is in the mind just that vacant O, that annular eclipse of intelligence, which the moon-mouth would indicate by the shape it assumes.

The Olympus of Homer is his holding-ground in the heavens. Therein he casts anchor, and so rides out the storms of time in security and peace of heart. He would have "marvelled" to find himself without it, and adrift on the sea of events. He sings first of all that which sings itself in him, the great faith of his soul.

Homer has, indeed, a keen sympathy with that which, perhaps ironically, is called "real life"; and therefore is able to paint it with an almost matchless precision and verisimilitude. He is heroically faithful to Mnemosyne. Here is her whole story, told without euphemism. Here is, now the struggle, and now the stupor of passion, now the rolling resistless tide, and now the sudden eddy and reflux, of courage, — rivalries, too, mixed irresolvably of noble and ignoble, honor and infamy, spun into the same thread; here are the ebb and flow, the toss and whirl, the interlacement, the twisted tangle, the blind and blurting conclusion, of actual life. Here also is the charm of

feature and picturesque detail ; individual action stands out in boldest relief, individual portraiture is lavished, while to all this is added the effect of diverse costumes, tongues, manners : the details, handled in a way less masterly, were bewildering in their multiplicity ; and the picture, but for its breadth, would be motley in the crowding of colors and contrasts. But the artist is at his ease with much as with little, — always the master. And yet, were this all, the Iliad would not be a poem : it were only a wondrous piece of photography.

It is that Olympian repose with which Homer is able to overarch this field of action, it is that peace of the All which he makes to breathe about the storm and change of man's little world, that shows him a poet rather than a photographer, Homer rather than De Foe. As his terrestrial observation is wide, genial, and exact, so the faith of his soul, its hold upon celestial Unity, is sure. To both he is just, and to each in its place and kind. And the objects of both, though opposite, blend in harmony ; and the greater, though not only greater, but *all*, does extinguish the less ; and the less, though it remains in vigor of feature and ruddiness of strength, *passes* while it remains, and only the One-and-All *is*. Thus his picture became a glass wherein the men of his time saw their life with more than mortal vision. There the visible had become ideal, yet retained its character ; there the invisible had become apparent, yet nowhere had broken the lines or blurred the feature of actual experience. There the tempest of our little life was seen rounded in with skies of everlasting calm : participants in the divine secret, the mortal beholders looked on and saw with new-informed eyes the cerulean circumambient eternity, as now it condensed its viewless burden into our whirling cloudlet of time, and anon drank it off into its own transparent peace.

I confess we can no longer see the same perfectly in the same mirror. To us the Iliad is not, cannot be, a pure epic. Homer's faith is not precisely that of the modern world ; we are able to follow him throughout only, as it were, by sympathy prepense. That "majestic, deathless head," whose nod once shook the world, and was the end of controversy to gods and men, is now subject to the dispute of any too ready tongue,

sovereign no more. But the eternal Zeus lives under another name, or without name ; Greece and Ilium we have, like the poor, always with us ; the epos of existence remains ; and Homer's speech needs but a translation into that diction which is behind the words, to become ours.

Have we sufficiently dwelt upon the first grand requisite of the epic ? Is it clear that this celestial unity must appear in the written poem, because in the being of man that sovereign import plays forever over the discord and disunity of our outward experience ? The matter has, indeed, been treated slightly, but I will suppose that enough has been offered on this head. Let us, then, turn the leaf.

That unity must have its opposite ; the nature of poetry, as we are aware, requires this. The opposite, too, must in the present case be no trivial one ; the play-over of Absolute Spirit should be worthy of it. The eagle does not display his strength of wing by merely flying across a ditch that a grasshopper might leap. Show us a chasm yawning all the way from east to west, wide as the world ; and when the genius of the universe shall cast over that an arch whose keystone is the zenith of eternity, it will do somewhat. Of this consummate act the epic poet is to make us witness.

Every epic artist represents, as antithetic to the unitive genius of being, *the infernal*, — that is, sheer moral inversion, sheer head-down of moral order, the one thing with which the soul cannot be directly reconciled. Moreover, he wellnigh seems to give this abhorrent thing full possession of the field. "I read in Homer," said Goethe, "that properly we enact hell here below." Is this a true reading of Homer ? And if so, does Homer read the world truly ? I think that in both Goethe and Homer it is a true reading.

Goethe's statement is, indeed, one-sided ; and he perhaps betrayed his own limit, while illustrating his penetration, in making it. He himself is a little lame of the right foot. His Mephistopheles is a lovely devil, *cap-à-pie* like a West Point cadet turned out for parade, — *magister artium* in his kind, compared with Milton's Titanic undergraduate. Here Goethe is perfect ; but the sovereign term, the Zeus, he does not manage so well.

Yet his statement about Homer can hardly be impeached. What is the situation described in the *Iliad*? It is this: the crime of a coxcomb has bound two noble nations by the loftiest public sentiment of antiquity, the sentiment of national honor, to the work of mutual destruction. The occasion of their sanguinary struggle is a deed they alike despise, a deed of which the fit notice were a hearty kicking to the culprit. And yet just that in each which dignifies and adorns their humanity it engages to the pitiless destruction of the other.

Is it said, that honor, rightly understood, engaged them to nothing of the sort? It would not in us; in them it *did* so; nor could they disobey its mandate without moral collapse. Hector says, the Trojan women, not to speak of the men, would despise him, did he decline the combat, odious to him as it was. I think it apparent that the nation which had yielded would have seen all the bands of order dissolve in the caustic of contempt.

Highest enslaved by lowest, and compelled to rivet and renew its own bonds,—that is the spectacle. What is intrinsically good, beautiful, noble, made not only to serve evil ends, but even to accept and consecrate the service,—that is the hateful situation which Homer places before us.

Does it seem that the dilemma might have been easily escaped? There is the very bite of it. So easy to escape,—and impossible! In Shakespeare we find the same. How easy for Cordelia, by two words, to save her father and herself the misery that ensues! Easy,—and she *cannot* utter them. It is her true, honorable love that forbids; it is the voluble hypocrisy of Regan and Goneril that compels her love to make its own misconstruction. The ease, and yet the impossibility; the nobleness that immediately makes the impossibility; the ape's hand that behind all manipulates the dead-lock: there, there is the poison of it.

Know we of nothing similar in actual life? Have we never seen petty interests, petty strifes, spites, jealousies, envies, of no more importance than the spit-spat of belligerent tom-cats, roping in worthy natures with abhorrent bands, that multiply and tighten till the anguish is intolerable?

Thackeray's she-catamount of a "campaigner" can hunt

Colonel Newcome to his death. What signifies her caterwaul, pray? He knows that it signifies nothing, and he dies of it; the contemptibleness of the torture makes it only the more torturing.

A politician rises in Congress, and proposes a compliment to the shillalah invasion of Canada. Honorable men, who despise the motion, feel compelled to sustain it; the election at New York is at hand, and such a resolution once offered, they dare not vote it down. In other circumstances, a war between England and America might easily have arisen from this move in the small game of an individual anxious to wipe out his "Know-Nothing" record; and when it had arisen, the purest patriotism in the land would have been driven, with loathing stomach, to sustain its country's quarrel. History, indeed, is replete with instances—and did we see it behind the curtains, more instances would be known to us—wherein the noblest sentiments of humanity have been harnessed beyond help in the dirt-carts of sordid interest, while pitiful tricksters, men who would sell what soul they have for a crossed sixpence, and cheat Mephistopheles in the bargain, hold the reins, and goad them on.

It is such a case from which the incident of Homer's story is drawn,—a case of moral head-down in the worst shape it could assume to the mind of Grecian antiquity. The great master does not hide, he is at pains to display, its hateful features. By the avowed and intense revolt of Hector's soul from the work his hands must do, the abhorrent constraint of the situation is made to the last degree biting. And that nothing might be wanting to the keenness of the contradiction, the Trojan prince is shown to us, not only in his valor, his magnanimity, his sense of justice, but also in the tender nobility of his domestic life. Andromache comes before us, queenly, devoted, in all the pathos of wifely love; while the babe, drawn to the father, shrinks away from the warrior, to suggest the last rebuke of that dreadful strife. Meanwhile, in contrast with this beautiful picture,—the noblest touch of tenderness that has come to us from the old Hellenic world,—Paris has signalized anew his luxurious infamy, and made the occasion of the struggle, odious enough before, seem intolerable. And

yet Hector must go to the field and to his doom, and Andromache remain behind, helplessly awaiting her doom, and doomed Ilium also abide her day.

All that follows upon the main situation is painted with the like pitiless fidelity,—pitiless only in fidelity; for deep, tender compassion is in the poet's soul. Hero after hero comes forth, uplifted with all soaring thoughts, godlike in bearing, glorious in form and in renown; then before our eyes he goes down; we see him clutch the earth in blind agony, we hear his armor clank over him,—his only knell. Nothing is explained away; and the pathos reaches its acmé in the stern, stern words, "all-ending death." The poet cuts off his understanding from all succors,—breaks down the bridges behind him. Only by a transcendent process does he escape into repose. The will of Zeus is accomplished: that is all. To Homer this *all* was enough. To the author of the Book of Job it was enough.* A deep sea in which to cast anchor! We in our day like shallower waters.

Why is it that Homer selects the sentiment of honor to be thus enslaved? Because he has the keenest sympathy with it. In his eyes it is noblest, best; its enslavement, therefore, shows most strikingly that moral inversion he wishes to display. Nor is he alone in this procedure; other epic poets have done the same. Dante is pre-eminently the poet of Love: read the story of Francesca, wherein the pathos of the Inferno culminates, and you find him distilling from the honey of love a cup that he swoons but to taste. Milton is the apostle of Liberty: in the *Paradise Lost* he has opened the heavens to show us the impulse to just this, Liberty, turned toward the pit, and drawing after it one third part of heaven's host. Goethe's noblest trait is his intellectual devotion, his worship of Truth: it is precisely this that in his half-epic betrays Faust. In the *Ramayana*, a supreme emphasis is laid upon truth in the sense of veracity, respect for the plighted word. Describing his hero, Kapila says: "This illustrious prince could

* It is true that at the end of the Book of Job a kind of offset is got up. But we may observe, that, in representing this pay-off appreciable by the understanding, the poet—if he wrote the conclusion—falls from poetry to prose. The poem was already complete.

willingly renounce life, fortune the most opulent, desire the most dear, — but the truth never.” Now it is just this, respect for the plighted word, that brings about the catastrophe of the poem.

Somewhere in his picture, and generally in the foreground, the epic artist casts in this quintessence of contradiction, this ink of indelible darkness, Worst from Best, — all the juices of sweet life going to feed cancers. Moreover, the higher the art and the grander the genius of the poet, the more resolutely does he leave this terrible fact in possession of its proper field. In the Ramayana, those who had fallen in the war against the demon were, after the victory, magically restored to life. That is impure art. In the Iliad, death has his prey undisputed, and tragic fates pursue even the living. This is the manner of the master.

Worst from Best, — is it found only in poems? The stout common sense of Theodore Parker led him to say that Religion may become prince of the devils. Whence was the inquisition generated? It was bred out of the Beatitudes and the song of the angels, “Peace on earth, good-will to men!” What is wourali poison, in which South American Indians dip their arrows, compared with the envenomed conscience that even the spirit of Christendom has secreted? “We enact hell here below!”

In the epics, then, of men, and in the epic of the Supreme Poet, there is somewhat with which the heart of man cannot be reconciled, nor should be reconciled, since it is antithetic to moral order and unity: when man does not abhor it, he has forsworn his own nature. What, precisely, is this *somewhat*, this Satan ever going to and fro in the world, this serpent always lurking in garden? Let us see whether this thing can be accurately defined. Having learned its nature, — if, indeed, to do so be possible, — we may further inquire whether the epic idea of the world can be seen as comprehending, commanding it, and evoking melody from it. And if the attempt be daring, and our space for exposition brief, all the more must precision be sought; nor will a little formality in the statement, if it help toward precision, be esteemed inexcusable.

1. In the world of the senses and of science all goes by law,

the savans tell us. Granted : force has definite characters and constant measures ; in measure and character alike it is invariable. All there goes by law : by what kind of law, however ? By a law that is absolutely and everlastingly indifferent to any thought which man derives from his spiritual being, to any sentiment, any ideal desire or purpose of the soul. You would have a house, wherein to enshrine the sanctities and felicities of domestic life : what cares gravitation for your wish ? These Romans would build a city ; Michel Angelo would lift St. Peter's dome : gravitation enters into no complicity with such desires ; inexorably, stolidly faithful to its own business, it holds down the rock in the quarry ; whoever will get a block of it away shall sweat for it. Well, the builders outwit gravitation, making it help them lift the stone, and put it in place, where the stolid tug of that force shall serve their design : it is outwitted, that is all ; not in the least has it been won into sympathy with a human purpose. The forces of Nature, as they do not change to approach, so cannot change to elude, the design of man : get the wind of them, and they are captive. Now, as the soul has, through the body, a foothold in Nature, and commands immediately a certain amount of force, it is enabled to take natural law by surprise, and bring it to obedience. But in obedience it is remote as ever, maintaining the same impassive, unconquerable indifference to all that the soul imagines or intends. As with gravitation, so with all natural forces : even when serving the most vital uses, they are infinitely far away from man's thought of use. Oxygen rushes into the lungs, when they create a vacuum : it is but rushing into a vacuum. It combines with the globules of the blood to recreate life ; to further decomposition would suit it as well : growth and decay, life and death, man's gain or loss, pleasure or anguish, are to it quite the same. Thus it happens that man, as a worker in the realm of finite Nature, must always work among and upon forces that are no less than infinitely removed from any sympathy with his spirit. The world serves him, but does not know him even when it serves.

2. In using these forces, man puts himself somewhat in their power. We lift the roof, but lift it over our own heads : gravitation has no respect for the heads ; its business is to draw

downward, which it attends to assiduously, not considering who or what is beneath; and it holds the roof in place, I must repeat, only as it is outwitted. When the earthquake comes, comes its opportunity; and now men fly the houses they have built for their security. Moreover, for purposes of use we must set free agencies that were not active before, that we can never be sure of our ability to control, and that, despite their services, ever continue terrible to us. Fire, for example, is a demon that man has conjured up. It is needful, indispensable; we must take it into our houses near the cradle and the couch, must sleep with it for housefellow, knowing all the while that it is an untamable demon, never a whit domesticated by its long intimacy with man. Now fire is not bad; but the burning of the house, for which it is at any moment ready, were an evil. The burning of the house, and the fall, perchance, of the flaming roof upon those it was designed to shelter,—despite all the glosses of optimism, a plain man may take leave to regard that as indubitably an evil.

Here, therefore, is an evil, yet no evil principle. There is a gap between human ends and natural means; and evil—physical evil only as yet—is incidental to it.

3. Man is not only *in* this world of forces thus indifferent to every thought of his spirit, but, as an organized creature, he is himself composed of such forces. Yet more, they assume in him a new and peculiar intensity, becoming sensitive, and rounding into an Ego heated with immeasurable desire. Nevertheless, these forces, though as an organized nature he is compounded of them, belong to that world which is forever infinitely remote from the pure thought and ideal desire of his spirit. The relation of himself as spirit to himself as organized in nature is the same with the general relation of man to force in the external world. Hunger and thirst are no less indifferent than gravitation to all that the soul believes and loves. Temperamental force has its own orbit, moves by its own springs, knows only its own ends. Indispensable utilities are exacted from it; but it transmits them, as a mail-bag does letters, without knowing what is in them.

Thus the soul must not only work upon, it must also work by means of, an alien material. This material, moreover, is

not passive, it is *force*, fiercely intent, impersuasible. Accordingly, the soul can accomplish nothing, it is annulled, until by an efflux of virtue it takes possession of the field; while only by a continuance of the same energy does it keep possession. Even in victory and supremacy, it may not retire and sleep: its authority is dead, its victory vanishes, in the moment that it ceases to act and to overcome. It is a sovereign whose subjects are all rebels at heart, and become such in act the moment it does not make upon them an overmastering impression. They are rebels, not by any concerted antagonism to the regal principle, but because they are wholly moved by an intention of their own, which is alien and indifferent to spiritual ideas.

4. The soul, in building up its own architectures, and preparing its own repast, must make immaterial fire, must liberate demons in its own organic household, and so newly imperil itself. For the better culture and discipline of mankind, it establishes Property, — an institution which rests wholly upon an ideal basis: instantly it creates cupidity, a very terrible demon indeed, hungry beyond measure, sometimes in its rage of appetite devouring entire civilizations. What a raising of chimneys, called courts of law, there has to be! What anxious binding of the demon with precedents, statutes, legal forms! Despite all which, it will sometimes break bounds: and, indeed, when is it not breaking bounds, committing trespass, doing indescribable mischief?

The soul, again, builds the state, to incarnate therein, as in a larger body, the spirit of community: at once it sets free the love of dominion, — fire again, and a fire that makes horrible conflagrations. The desire of power and sway is not bad; the debt to it of civilization is immense, immeasurable; never was there a great ruler or statesman whose breast did not brim with it; and only at far-distant periods of time do the Timoleons and Washingtons appear, who possess it largely without being possessed by it. Often has it wrought prodigiously, when Goodness lay asleep, wrapped in sweet dreams; and history on many a page

“Tells how the drudging Goblin sweat
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
Till in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn
That ten day-laborers could not end.”

Nor, on the other hand, is it good ; for in itself it has no moral quality whatsoever. But a force destitute of all moral character, which nevertheless must be brought into the closest intimacy with moral interests, and even fanned and stimulated in their behalf, has in its capacities of evil.

The soul builds churches, architectures to house a thought higher still ; and again it makes fire ; and this time may make the very fire of hell, bigotry, conscientious hatred, holy cruelty, lying for God, tyranny that not only oppresses, but makes in its victims a hunger to be oppressed. And once more we have to say, that the force thus brought into action is in itself neither good nor evil, though of both good and evil it is vastly capable. Fire,—it may kindle fagots about the martyr, and blaze abroad to devastate entire centuries and civilizations, or may genially warm the hearts and households of believing ages.

Finally, this Ego of ours, — this also is demon, is fire. The Spirit makes it : never could mere organic force become conscious, and say *I*. But the Spirit makes it as the intensest conceivable antithesis to its own pure, including universality. *I*, — what a portentous exclusion the word implies ! It shuts out all the universe beside itself ; indeed, to the egoistic apprehension pure and simple, *I* is universe, is god. A wonderful thing is this particular, limited Self. It is *eccentric centre*, — pure partiality in the state, and with the sense of perfect wholeness. It is Spirit inverted or reverted from its comprehending, universal self-identity, to sustain its own intensest contradiction, a purely limited and excluding self-identification. This special Self is demon all and only. Not good, it is yet here as the strong caryatid to sustain a spiritual consciousness, which is God's surpassing work of art. Not bad, it is nevertheless a caryatid whose head is not kept under without pains, and that at best seldom fails to put a wry face upon his labor.

Fire is not bad ; but the burning of the house, which despite all precautions may happen, were an evil. Egoism is not bad ; but its exaction and forage upon the soul, which in some degree are sure to happen, are an evil. When the forces of finite Nature turn the virtue and providence of the soul against itself, then there is evil, devil. Devil is not a person, it is not even

a thing or a force ; it is simply an effect incidental to a particular form of relation. With finite Nature, fixed, resolute, inexorable in its finitude, the soul must make an intimacy, to which intimacy Nature can never respond by the faintest blush of sympathy ; natural forces will seek forever, must forever seek, to carry away in their own line whatever comes within their reach ; and when they succeed in appropriating and bringing into their own line of action the virtue of the soul, evil appears. The epic poet represents this most terrible incident of the Spirit's engagement in Nature,—the soul pulled overboard by the fish it was drawing in,—the soul caught in the mesh of its own mechanism, ground in its own mill.

If, now, the foregoing exposition be at all correct, it will appear, that, though there is no evil principle, though Satan is the boldest of impersonations, implying some temerity of rhetoric, yet the Satanic, the infernal, exists nevertheless. Disease is no entity ; but epilepsy and lockjaw are quite real.

On the other hand, the epic "play-over" must not be forgotten. Evil is real, but it is not commensurate with man's being. Man is properly supernatural ; the soul is above all its experience within the limits of finite Nature, and

" Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

Accordingly, I find two opposite classes of theorists, who, severally following, though in contrary directions, a linear and prosaic logic, arrive at a forced conclusion on this matter. The one party, beginning from below, and perceiving evil to be real relatively to the soul as engaged in Nature, reasons to the eternal from the temporal, and asserts a supernatural Satan, conceived of either as a person or a state of existence. The other party, setting out from man's supreme consciousness, wherein he feels the serene eminence of his spirit over Nature, reasons downward, and declares that even within the limits of Nature evil is not real.

The latter opinion seems to have been adopted with a degree of enthusiasm by the Emersonian school in America, though of Mr. Emerson himself one may rather say that he has shown a marked predilection for it than that it is sustained by him as a fixed dogma. The chief argument for it is an undeniable

fact, namely, that evil is often reconverted to use. But were this always the case, evil would not lose its proper character. At sight of somewhat with which it cannot be reconciled, the soul is stung, and newly incited. Well, why is it stung? Whence the provocation? It is the sight or the experience of somewhat odious to the soul that stings. If we say, "This so-called evil is made to serve a use, therefore it is not evil; whatever is right; the soul can and must be reconciled with it," — where are we? Let us shun huddled thinking.

Asafoetida is the best of antispasmodics; it does not therefore smell the better. Esteem me not narrow-minded, if I hold my nose. The philosopher tells me, indeed, that only devil knows devil, — that only because I am cousin-german to asafoetida does its 'odor offend me. Perhaps so; it may be, that, were the nose regenerate, it would find only frankincense in foetor. I humbly confess such grace has not been given that organ. Be it to my shame or no, I must distinguish between scent of heliotrope and scent of carrion-flower. I follow my nose as my fathers did before me. Nor in truth do I propose to be shamefaced before Philosophy in doing so. Offence is offence, make the best of it. Evil is a thing good to esteem bad, good to be offended at, good to keep the cork on. Like ipecacuanha and tartar-emetic, it is useful only as it creates nausea and is intolerantly rejected by the system.

It is said further, that Good has a vast power of assimilation, a chemistry that nothing can wholly resist. This also is true. As in the physical world the organic force will masticate quartz and porphyry, gnawing away at the frozen adamant of mountain crags with teeth harder and more capable of self-repair than those of rodents, and solving all with the alchemy of eupeptic life, until it has given the earth flesh, has clothed this with the garniture of field and forest, and digested this again into animal form and motion, so the higher genius that works in humanity to dissolve and to organize does not live upon spoon-victual alone, but has teeth to cut platinum, a stomach to digest poison, and an art out of pus and gangrene to make the vigor of dancing feet and bloom of dawning beauty. Eyes that are not sick will see this without spectacles, and sound minds will be apt to emphasize it. But let us not say

too much, and be like cowards who betray fear by voluble affirmation that there is no danger. Good has diamond teeth,—and it needs them! Poor logic, to say, that, because it has this masticating and digestive force, therefore all is food for it, artistically prepared by some cosmic Blot, and that what seems odious is only pepper-sauce, a sharp condiment to provoke appetite.

In fine, the universe will not be spun out in one thread, and turned to prose. Our nice mental machinery can do much, but cannot do that; and this new-patented method of optimism fails like every other. It does good work of the kind, but the poetic truth of existence will not be caught on the smooth-turning spindle.

The opposition of good and evil is never to be explained away. But this opposition is itself prosaic, if only in itself considered. To deny it is fatal to epic truth; to remain only in it, the captive and jail-bird of Nature, is no less fatal. Evil, and good *as merely opposed to evil*, belong alike to the soul only as standing in organic connection with finite Nature; but the soul's true being is not in Nature, it is in Spirit, the self-affirmed, eternal, indivisible Import, into which Nature, as sign, evermore resolves itself. To the bird as walking the wall exists, and is impassable: the bird takes wing, and the wall, though solid as ever, becomes for it no wall. But man at once walks and flies,—walks and works on these levels of Nature, yet by his true substantive being soars and circles in the divine ether; and here, in unity with the One-and-All, he is himself the sky, which rounds in and contains in harmony his natural experience. In his breast is enshrined this exceeding great mystery,—the infinite separation of Nature from Spirit, the perfect poetic comprehension of Nature by Spirit. A mystery, nay, a very dust in the eyes, to prose thought, it is far otherwise in the *being* of man, as in the universe of God: here it abides in poetic clearness forever,—so clear, that the voice of it, when it comes to speech, can be no other than a voice of singing, to which only melodious numbers and concord of sweet sound afford a fit expression. The universe rings with it like a bell; and the heart of the poet, being *whole*, also rings silver-clear; and in the deep heart of humanity a poetic thought is perennial, though in general it is shattered on the lips.

From the height of its perfect consciousness the soul looks down upon the imperfect *quasi* world of Nature; and seeing itself involved there, yet not involved,—locked into those limits of inexorable finitude, yet above them, including them, resolving them into that breath of Spirit which sings while it passes,—it has the sentiment not only of a Whole, but of an epic Whole, including within its flawless unity the intensest contradiction.

We are now prepared, let it be supposed, to attempt a final survey of this epic Whole, this Iliad of existence, placing its grand features in their true relation to each other. Only from the summit of thought and consciousness can such a survey be attempted sanely; we must therefore begin and end with the all-comprehending Unity, with pure Spirit.

1. Man has the consciousness of Spirit in its integrity, whole and the whole, nothing if not all. He knows this, and, as knowing, is one with it. Never can it be known as *other* than that by which it is known; if another, it is no longer *the* One, but only a particular existence. Tell me not of *a* God, one being particularized among others, though great or greatest. John Stuart Mill kindly explains, that, though it be ridiculous to speak of *the* Infinite, *the* Absolute, yet God may be infinite in a particular way,—infinitely just and good in the sense of being entirely just and good. His infinite is merely unmixed quality. In the same sense a spider is infinitely a spider, if it be all and only spider. Should the creature ever be afflicted with a doubt about the propriety of catching flies, the spiderly nature, becoming mixed, would fall from infinitude. Infinite in the sense of pure quality is perhaps as good an infinite as positivism admits of; but I quite agree with Mr. Mill in thinking it ridiculous to call this *the* infinite.

The infinite of Spirit is not to be caught in a cobweb. The ambitious broom of positivist logic will neither sweep it down from the dark corners of the understanding nor sweep it together from the floors of phenomenal Nature. What it is we may a little conceive thus: though there were a myriad of perfectly rational minds, there were but one Reason, *and each of them were it*. The consciousness of reason is an integrating consciousness; in it there is a unity, not numerical, but intrinsic:

multiple in manifestation, it is not divided, nor in itself multiple, but ever identical. Spirit is reason, and more than we mean by reason distinctively. It is not only integral, but is active, eternal, absolute integration. As there is not only a possible rest *in* motion, but also a rest *of* motion,—as, for example, in orbital movement,—so there is a unity, not only *in* multiplicity, but *of* multiplicity,—a unity of comprehension and embrace, which, though it contain contradiction, yet does indeed *contain* it, and therefore remains itself unbroken. The consciousness of this it is that the human race has confessed so often as it has said *God*. There is no night there; there all limit is swallowed up, freedom and necessity become one and the same; there the jars of Nature blend in the tune of the eternal Whole, and the clash of oppositions is felt to be sustained by the very unity which they seemingly oppose. “The will of Zeus is accomplished”: it is the key-note which to every note is a key. Spirit is; and he is Spirit who is conscious of it, and he the voice of it who hears its language. Spirit is, the everlasting Only, only and all, playing over opposition, yet never opposed; abiding ever in itself, yet not aloof; dwelling only with itself, yet housing the universe.

2. Nevertheless, in precise antithesis to this, there is the world of finite Nature, also assuming to be all, and indeed complete in its way,—no escape from it, when once you have accepted its level and law. It bears, however, this ear-mark of imperfection, that the essential character of it is to be excluding. Excluding: every particle of matter shoulders away every other;—every square inch of space says, as it were, to universal space, “Stand off!”—every moment of time fixes itself between the two eternities of time, denying them, saying, “Of time I alone *am*, I, the present moment!”—every force, so much as it acts, negates all other force. It is a universe of exclusions,—purest conceivable opposite to the including simplicity of Spirit.

What then? We have a dual world: Spirit and Nature standing in irreconcilable opposition, each, it should seem, excluding the very possibility of the other. Yet as Spirit is whole and the whole, or is nothing, dualism kills it. And, indeed, many in our day espouse the cause of finite Nature to

this extent, saying, "Spirit *can* be no more than a fiction of speech, since for it as a reality Nature leaves no room." True, Nature has no room for it. Here is a difficulty, which to a prosaic speculation is, and must remain, insuperable. But the bolt turns to another key.

3. We have seen that this self-asserting finite Nature asserts itself only to the same ear which itself makes, to the finite understanding. To the higher poetic intelligence, it is only Sign, only Language. As such, it declares itself to be in and of itself *nothing*. A word,—for what is it here? To be somewhat in itself? No, but expressly to be nothing in itself. It is a word only as, vacating itself, pointing away from itself, denying its own substantiality, it simply and unequivocally *stands for* somewhat which indeed is, namely, an import existing in the mind. The world, then, as Sign, denies its substantial existence, vacates its own pretension to reality, and affirms what is not itself, affirms a significance whose unity and substantiality is Spirit.

It has been said, but will bear saying again, that to this significant and therefore ever-vanishing character of Nature all human speech is due. So all mythology, all theology, comes of the impulse to render that language which Nature is into the language man uses. Poetry, painting, every fine art, is a fine art for the reason that it elects the significant impression of Nature as the real fact of it, while the so-called useful arts regard Nature only in its lower character, as force. Whence the charm of landscape painting? It is always inferior to that which one may any day see from his doorstep. The charm of it is this: it presents Nature as *only* picture, only significant show, without its outdoor pretension to substantiality,—presents Nature more as what it veritably is. Hence mere *fac-simile* painting, which foists upon the picture Nature's habitual disguise of its true character, is but mock art.

4. Having thus affirmed Spirit, then shown finite Nature as apparently denying it, then again shown the same Nature as confessing itself a mere sign of that which it seems to deny, we come to an act which concerns us human beings very nearly, but of which there seems to be in the streets of our cities little notice taken. I have never once seen mention of it on the bulletin-boards, nor found it in the column of news.

Spirit issues in person, in the person, that is, of humanity, upon this scene of finite Nature ; *accepts the fiction of its substantiality* ; and even so, upon these hard terms, extorts a confession of its presence and quality. Here, then, it is in the militant state, a warrior in armor, overcoming a hostility that never abates, compelling a confession ineffably alien to the lips that utter it.

Spirit militant, Spirit accepting the fiction of Nature's substantiality to conquer it on its own level, — this is the moral life of humanity. With this "accepted fiction" under the feet, we cannot wonder that our life should divide itself into the irreconcilable opposites, Right and Wrong, God and Devil. A contradiction is involved in such a state of existence ; the contradiction will appear, and make itself felt, sometimes to the utter anguish of the soul.

Here the soul conquers, but always with costs ; here it endures defeat, but in defeat still conquers, if its quality has been signalized. No other business has it than to say effectually, I AM : achieving this, though in dungeons, at the stake, on the cross, it is victorious.

Partial defeat it ever does and must suffer, optimism to the contrary notwithstanding. "All is well," am I told ? Yes, the All is very well, undoubtedly. One gets fresh intelligence of that fact in his own breast now and then, and pipes his little note of rejoicing accordingly. But is this taken to mean that all *goes* well ? that in the line and on the level of outward events there is perfect process ? that the moral life of man involves no contradiction, in the midst of which the soul must strive and suffer ? that we may lie on our oars and trust the tide of events to take us to port ? Enough, O, more than enough of this ! In the line of events, as related to the moral life of humanity, there is, there *can* be, no perfect process on the earth : the very conception of our existence forbids. We chant, with a sweet imbecility, "the good time coming" : it is ever coming, and never come. Some say that the golden age has been, and some that it is to be ; but I, that all events are cheap and all times tawdry, — that only the soul is golden, and that the shine of this metal out of the dust-cloud of history is the true result.

Here is the field of the tragic poet. He causes the soul to show itself and to shine from out the utmost darkness and devilishness of events. The one is helpless and inextinguishable; the other victorious and without honor. The soul suffers every conceivable defeat, and is godlike still; the law of events follows its own fatal course, making no clear distinction between good and bad, and is seen in its proper under-foot character. Thus, Shakespeare in his grand tragedies will give us scarce a crumb of comfort, so far as the course of events is concerned. Iago, indeed, ends his iniquity with his death: who is consoled? who cares? You crush the snake that has just fleshed its fang in priceless honor and innocence: well; it was but a snake. Iago dies; but Desdemona, Othello! — who talks of a balance struck? Or who in this presence will proclaim the “good of evil”? What good? Snake number two is more likely to be regenerate? St. Snake is somewhat less beautiful to me than the creature uncanonized. Anything, if you please, but Satan in a state of grace!

I thank Shakespeare that he gives no hint of these suspicious compensations. Out of wrong done and suffered the soul has shown its quality: this is the true result. All the grandeur of the great poet’s genius is found in this, his habitual manner of representing life. Had he stooped to patch up events, pretending, after the fashion of the novelist, that the significance of life is found in *their* course and result, he would have stooped indeed, and been no longer Shakespeare.

Spirit by issuing upon this scene of things brings moral good to a world which before was but a system of forces, incapable of moral character: by the same act it makes the possibility and the *general* (not particular) necessity of moral evil. It does so by placing the virtue of the soul within reach of the energies of the finite world, “laws” of Nature, organic impulses and desires, — huge polypi, that throw their long tenacious tentacles about all that comes within their scope, and know not what they devour. Thus the Hebrew “God of battles” — the unity of Spirit in the militant state — says, “I, God, make good, and I create evil.” Does this sound harsh? But is it not true? Are not moral good and moral evil correlative opposites, each of which forever wars upon and forever implies

the other? Does not the soul make both, the former by its intrinsic quality, and the latter by the situation it accepts? As the human providence which evokes the element of fire makes it possible that any house may burn and certain that some houses will burn, so spiritual virtue, by creating moral good, enables the characterless energies of Nature to attain the higher, though abhorrent quality of evil.

But the divining sense of humanity has touched the ultimate truth of this situation with a precision yet more admirable. Spirit militant, appearing no longer as the "God of battles," but as the suffering Prince of Peace, the crucified God, meekly enduring, in the consciousness of an infinite resource, all the utmost despite of Nature,—never yet has a nobler or *truer* imagination inspired the worship of humanity. A great injustice is, indeed, done this perennial poetic truth, when it is *Calvinized* into prose; yet what an appeal, even so, has it made to the heart of man! Let the form change as it may and must; but let the grand imagination remain, for the tragedy of the world has this extent; and Æschylus and Shakespeare and every greatest poet has touched it most nearly just then when his genius was at the supreme height.

The strictly moral consciousness is dualistic, not integrating; for beneath its feet is an assumption contradictory to the eternal quality of Spirit, namely, the assumed substantiality of finite Nature. Hence it dwells in a divided world, whose ultimate terms are God (the warring or suffering God) and Devil. But optimism pretends that the moral consciousness is unitive and entire. It blinks the underlying contradiction, and therefore must seek to persuade us that "the Devil is not so black as he is painted," and indeed is not of a black complexion at all, but is only a serviceable angel in soiled linen,—grimed with necessary labor, and none the worse for not appearing in holiday clothes. I freely make over my share in this charitable judgment to those who can find a use for it, and freely confess that a more limping, one-legged thing is not known to us than a purely moralistic theology which sets out with denying the necessary dualism of morals.

5. But the old religionists permitted themselves to speak of *mere* morality, as if there were a consciousness in man and a

truth in being that transcended morals, though without invalidating them. Were they utterly deceived? Has humanity no consciousness, has being no character of this transcendent kind? Are right and wrong the supreme words? — wrong, however, being inscrutably wrung back, and so brought, as it were clandestinely, into the line of right. Epic imagination, whether as found in written poems, or as speaking in all the higher spirituality of mankind, affirms a sovereign Unity, which, indeed, becomes moral by descent into the limits of finite Nature, but which is in itself, as Hooker said, “not only one, but very oneness,” while in oneness it includes, and is, all. Let it be permitted me to speak as I can, and without reproach, of this Unspeakable, happy if the words shall in any manner or degree hint what the best of words will never more than hint.

It may be read in epics, and as their supreme import, necessary to render them epical, that Spirit, even while provisionally accepting this finite Nature as substantial, and issuing upon it in the militant character, remains not the less and forever in itself, in the consciousness of its pure, eternal integrity, unbroken by the dividedness of time, untouched by its tumult. This One to which there is no Other, while yet it does not exclude, but embraces and houses all multiplicity and diversity, — is it not the “open secret,” always inaccessible to the critical understanding, while to the adoring heart and spiritual imagination it is not only accessible, but is alone to them in the deepest sense native? Inexplicable, indubitable, not to be solved only because itself the universal solvent, it is the mystery of eternity, yet is mysterious only to the prosaic mind, while only through its infinite reconciling presence is finite Nature itself other than an affronting mystery to the credent and poetic soul. This is the blessed *play-over*, beneath which, and yet within which, all the fortune of life, all the struggle and process of existence, go on, and into which they evermore vanish, to appear in vanishing and to die in renewal, as words sink and are lost in the import that creates and sustains them.

An indestructible consciousness in man, fundamental fact of his being, makes him a participant in this oneness, this wholeness, this perfection of Spirit in itself. Spirit as engaged in Nature, — it is Sarpedon, son of Zeus, warring, stricken, perish-

ing, lying gory on the battle-field ; Spirit abiding in itself, — it is Zeus poised in Olympian peace, and in himself containing all. Sarpedon falling, dying, the victim of Nature ; Zeus immortal, hurtless as the blue heaven, and embracing Nature as the sky the earth ; — the one is the passionate experience of man, and the other is his pure, integrating consciousness. But the latter is his consciousness, not merely as *his*, and subjective, but as veritable, substantial, the indivisible consciousness of Spirit, existing only because Spirit is, one and indivisible, — the eternal fact impressing itself with the sense of its own infinite reality.

It follows from all the foregoing that man's being is a scale of three degrees. On the lowest, he is only an organized nature, a mote or molecule in the immeasurable system of things ; a little learning the trick of it, a little and a little better able, from age to age, to take care of his small peculium ; getting to be at length, from a mote, an insect, and humming so as to be heard, O, yards away ! On the degree above this, far above, he is moral, engaged in the battle without truce between good and evil ; at issue with others and with himself ; finding a law in his members warring upon the law of his mind and bringing him into captivity, till he cry, " Wretched man that I am ! " Here he may have noble battle, but never peace ; always there is a Hannibal in his Italy, or the Gauls are gathering on the border ; and he is still bound by the necessities of the conflict in the rare hours of his triumphal march. On the highest degree, he is one with the One-and-All. Here, as from the height of eternity, he looks down on his small fortunes in the world of time, and by all that he there suffers renews and intensifies the consciousness of his eternal security and sovereignty in God.

It was the door into this supreme consciousness that the Christian evangel, particularly as represented by Paul, unbarred and threw open to the access of mankind ; the doctrine of " salvation by faith," though its dryness now parches the tongue, began the epopee of Christendom, and gave the key-note to the largest symphony in which the imaginations of nations and ages have as yet joined. This consciousness, though not at all denying, but, on the contrary, admitting and

using, what is beneath it, declares itself alone veritable. Spirit only is ; all else appears, and is not. And here one cannot help asking by what fine luck it was that Hellenic tradition made Homer blind ; that which he sang he saw but as a picture within his breast. For so the eye of absolute Spirit sees Nature and the natural experience of man as things by itself imagined, airy nothings with a local habitation and a name.

The epic poet sets off all the worst that the soul can suffer in Nature against that higher impossibility of its suffering at all. He gives himself the divine pleasure of beholding this troubled, tumultuous *quasi* existence as it vanishes momentarily and forever into the peace and perfect comprehension of Spirit in itself. That engagement in Nature, and yet an everlasting ease and delight of self-rescue out of Nature, — the perpetual play-up of finite life out of itself and into the infinite as its truer self, while Spirit in its divine play-over stoops to the world, and, stooping, remains infinitely above, and seeming to acknowledge another than itself, makes that apparent *other* an instrument through which to blow its eternal affirmation, I ONLY AM ; — this is that symphony of being whose choirs are solar and stellar systems, and whose notes and numbers are individual lives, while in each note the tune of the whole, the tune of eternity, presides, and the Symphonist himself is present. And in finding this, we find the epic interpretation of human life.

D. A. WASSON.